

1.

That Boy Next Door

by Cheryl Rao

Reading

Read a story about two boys who started as rivals but worked together as a team to win a game.

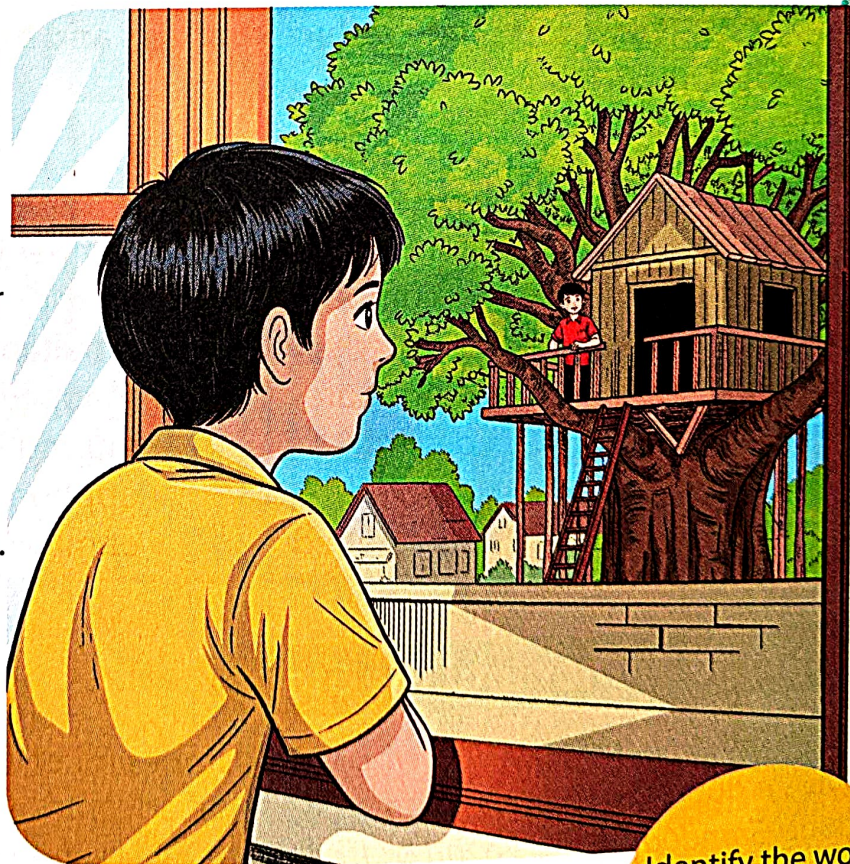
Ashish disliked Dev at first sight, right from the moment he shifted next door during the holidays. Ashish had been peeping over the wall, watching all the activity as furniture and boxes were **carted** into the neighbouring house. It was a long time before he looked up and saw a boy of about his age sitting up in a tree on the other side, **peering** at him!

The next thing he knew, there was a lot of hammering, nailing and tying on that same tree and soon, a tree house that was light years ahead of his own three **planks** on the banyan tree was staring him

in the face. For years, he had played happily on his **crude** platform, making-believe it was Tarzan's home in the jungle but now he no longer wanted to swing from the tree onto the ground screaming, "Yee-agh!" because he knew that the new boy would be watching. He would be watching and laughing too!

The next evening, when he cycled down the road, something **whizzed** past him. He stopped and stared.

It was none other than the boy next door on a brand new racing bike with gears, just like the one Ashish had been admiring in the shops and had planned to ask his parents for his birthday.



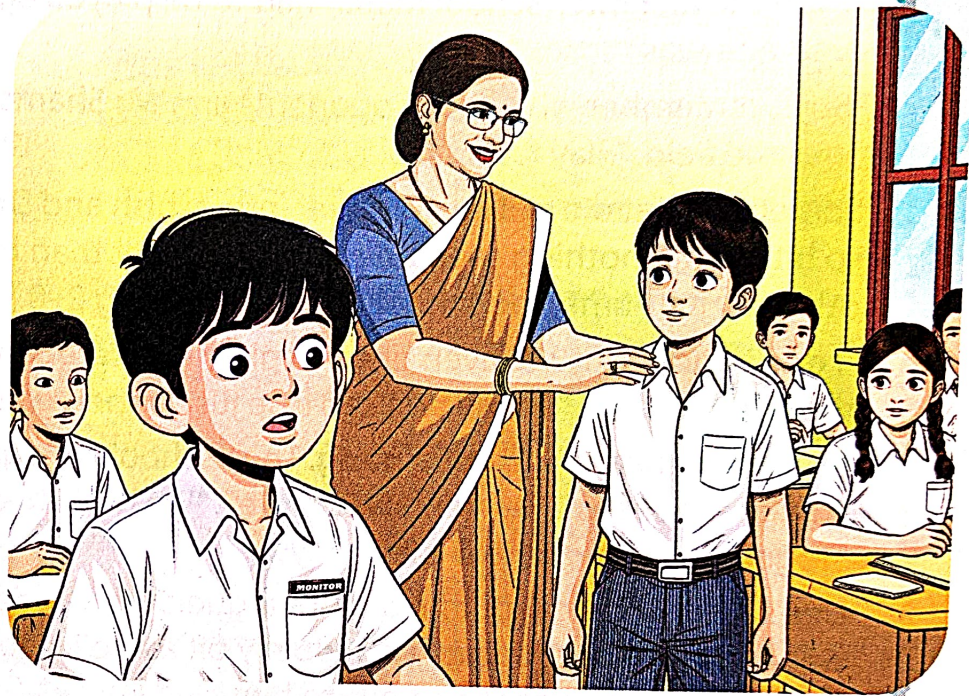
Identify the word that means the same as 'looking closely'.

Somehow, he had managed to avoid accompanying his mother to the neighbour's house when she had gone to welcome them to the colony.

"Their son's name is Dev and he is just about your age," she had said to Ashish. "You must call him to play with you."

However, each time she reminded him, he hurriedly began a new "homework assignment" and avoided meeting up with Dev. "Once school reopens, Ma won't **keep on** at me to make friends with him," he thought, praying for the holidays to end soon.

At last, he was back in school, the monitor of the class, feeling very important because he had done really well in his quarterly exams with the highest marks in almost every subject. Then, there he was like a **nightmare** in broad daylight—Dev, from next door! The new boy, who had come in the middle of the year and, according to the teacher, needed everyone to help him catch up with the work! Well, Ashish for one would not be doing any helping!



A couple of weeks went by and it seemed that Dev had certainly been hard at work, for he was getting full marks in most of the tests and always seemed to know the answers in class when the teacher quizzed them. Ashish began to feel **threatened**. Especially since, slowly, Dev seemed to be making a lot of friends, and whenever Ashish peeped over the wall, he could see one or two of his classmates dropping in at Dev's house.

When the time came for selections for the football and basketball teams, both Ashish and Dev were keen competitors.

Mr Shamsheer, the new games master, had been watching the children play inter-house matches for weeks and when he called out the names of each team, Dev and Ashish found to their horror that they were both selected for the football team!

What emotion is Ashish going through here? Have you ever felt the same? Share the incident.

"No, Sir," **protested** Ashish and Dev **simultaneously**.

Mr Shamsheer glared at them. "Then you can stay out of the team," he **snapped**, turning around and dismissing the others. "See that you are here every morning one hour before assembly."

"Please, Sir," Ashish and Dev said hastily. "We will also be here for practice."

The others left the field **murmuring** among themselves. "Why does Shamsheer Sir want them together? Does he not know what trouble they will create?"

When the first inter-school match had to be played against St. Mark's, everyone was tense.

"Boys, remember who your opponents are," Mr Shamsheer said as they went onto the field. "Play fair, but play to win!"

Somehow that did not seem to get into Ashish and Dev. Their enmity was so bitter that nothing seemed more important than being one up on each other. By half-time, the school team was trailing 2-0.

"I don't know why we even need to play," **muttered** one of the players from the visiting team. "Those two can lose just by being on the field!"

Ashish overheard and felt a **pang**. Their school would soon be the **laughing stock** of the town. He went over to Dev. "We need to cooperate," he said. "Together we can defeat these guys."

Dev's eyes widened, but he did not argue. Just having Ashish talk to him was a major **turnaround**. "I can do my bit as well; I guess," he thought, and listened as Ashish spoke calmly to him.

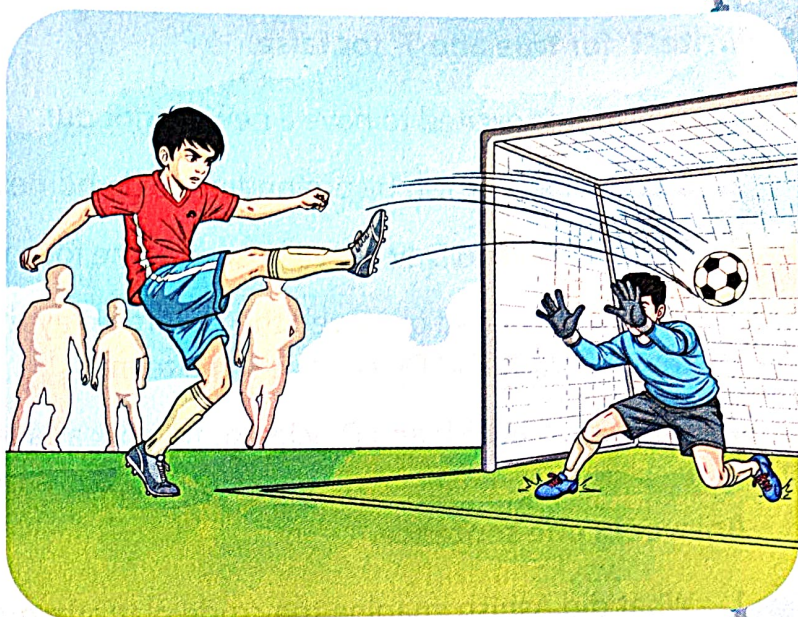
When they went back to the field, it seemed as though a magic wand had been waved. With a fresh burst of energy, the two boys passed the ball to each other and their teammates with ease and soon were able to even the score. There were three minutes of play left when Ashish managed to get the ball and he set off across the field.



"Here!" yelled Dev, and Ashish saw that the field was clear ahead of him but there were two St. Mark's boys breathing down his neck. Quickly, he kicked, and to his relief, his aim was true. Dev stopped the ball and ran with it towards the goal.

His teammates yelled to him, "Kick!" and he did, the ball going straight over the goalkeeper's head and into the net just a few seconds before the bell rang to mark the end of the match.

There was an uproar from the spectators. Dev was thrilled. He put his hands up in the air and jumped around madly, **savouring** the crowd's approval.



Ashish and Dev made peace with each other and worked things out. What would have been the outcome, had they not done so?

Ashish walked up to him and clapped him on the back, shouting, "Hey, that was great! You saved the school!"

The other boys moved away warily, wondering what would come next. However, Dev laughed excitedly and said, "I could not have done it without that great pass you sent me!"

The two boys went towards Mr Shamsheer who was grinning from ear to ear and looking quite unlike his usual **stern** self. He opened his arms and hugged the boys. "It pays to be on the same team, doesn't it?" he asked.

Word Power

carted: carried something with a lot of effort | **peering:** looking carefully or curiously at something | **planks:** long, narrow flat pieces of wood | **crude:** roughly made | **whizzed:** moved very fast | **keep on:** continue doing something in an annoying way | **nightmare:** an unpleasant dream | **threatened:** (here) feeling that someone might cause one to be less admired | **protested:** (here) complained about something | **simultaneously:** in a way that is happening at the same time | **snapped:** spoke something angrily | **murmuring:** (here) talking in a slow, complaining manner | **muttered:** spoke in a low voice often in a worried or complaining way | **pang:** (here) strong feeling of emotional pain | **laughing stock:** something that everyone laughs at as it seems foolish | **turnaround:** (here) a positive change | **savouring:** enjoying an experience as much as one can | **stern:** severe

Understanding the Story

A. Write 'T' for true and 'F' for false.

1. Ashish was excited to have a new neighbour.
2. Dev avoided Ashish by pretending to do homework.
3. Both Ashish and Dev were chosen for the football team.
4. Mr Shamsheer had observed the children play the matches and then decided to put Ashish and Dev on the same team.
5. In the end, Ashish and Dev learnt to work as a team.

B. Answer in one sentence.

1. What did Ashish imagine the crude platform on the tree to be?
.....
2. What kind of bike did Dev have?
.....
3. Which sport did both Ashish and Dev get selected for?
.....
4. What did Ashish say to Dev during the match that changed the game?
.....
5. How did the spectators react as the final goal was scored?
.....

C. Read the sentences and answer the questions.

1. *Ashish had been peeping over the wall, watching all the activity as furniture and boxes were carted into the neighbouring house.*
 - a. Who had come to stay in the neighbouring house?
 - b. Why was Ashish interested in the activities next door?
 - c. What does this action suggest about his personality at this point?
2. *Ashish began to feel threatened.*
 - a. Whom did Ashish feel threatened by?
 - b. Why did Ashish feel threatened?
 - c. What was the result of this feeling?



3. "Then you can stay out of the team," he snapped, turning around
 - a. Whom does 'he' refer to in the above sentence?
 - b. Who were 'you' in this context?
 - c. What was the reply received?
4. "It pays to be on the same team, doesn't it?"
 - a. Who said these words and to whom?
 - b. When does the speaker say so?
 - c. What is the significance of this sentence?

Answer the questions.

1. Why did Ashish avoid going to Dev's house?
2. What was the turning point in Ashish and Dev's relationship?
3. Why did Ashish decide to talk to Dev in the end?
4. Analyse Mr Shamsheer's role in resolving the conflict between Ashish and Dev.
5. What is the main theme of the story?

GROUP WORK Think and answer.

1. Do you think Ashish was right to avoid Dev at first? Why or why not?
2. What would have happened if Ashish had not cooperated during the match? Discuss.
3. Ashish and Dev resolved their differences and worked together to help their team win the match. How can resolving conflicts peacefully and working together as a team contribute to building a peaceful and inclusive community?

Game

Enjoying the Story



A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unlike things. It does this without using the words *like* or *as*. Instead, it says one thing is another to suggest a shared quality or idea.

In the story, through the sentence, "... a tree house that was light years ahead of his own three planks on the banyan tree ...", the tree house that Dev built is compared to something extremely advanced or better, even though the comparison isn't literal. It also indirectly highlights Ashish's feelings of inferiority.

A. Read the following sentences and underline the metaphor in each one.

1. The homework was a mountain to climb.
2. The classroom was a circus.
3. Her heart is a cold stone.
4. Manas is a shining star in the play.

B. Create your own metaphors on the following.

1. Your favourite food
2. Your best friend
3. Your school

Vocabulary



A. Match the words to their meanings.

- | | | |
|--------------|----------|---|
| 1. peering | a. | falling behind |
| 2. carted | b. | work together for a common purpose |
| 3. trailing | c. | looking curiously |
| 4. cooperate | d. | loud confused noise from many sources |
| 5. uproar | e. | the act of hitting repeatedly with a hammer |
| 6. hammering | f. | carried something heavy |

Read this sentence.

There were two St. Mark's boys **breathing down his neck**.

In the above sentence, the expression in bold is an idiom, which means that someone is staying very close to another person, often in a way that feels pressuring or uncomfortable, especially when they are watching what the person is doing.

An **idiom** is an expression that has a different meaning from the literal meaning of the individual words.

B. Fill in the blanks with the idioms given below.

green with envy

eye to eye

under the weather

bury the hatchet

crying over spilt milk

the ball is in your court

back in the game

- The boys never seemed to see, especially when it came to sports.
- Ashish was when he saw Dev riding the bike he had wanted for his birthday.
- The results are not in our favour. There is no use
- After realising their team was losing because of their rivalry, they decided to and work together.
- I've given you all the information, now
- Tapas is feeling a bit today, so he is going to rest.
- After resting for a week due to his injury, Arjun is finally